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ABSTRACT

This booklet is a brief collection of pointers for technology educators on how to establish productive partnerships with companies, parents, community groups, and other educators to help fund the growth of expanding technology education programs. Following sections on success stories, how partners help your program, and how your partners benefit, step-by-step instructions for developing and marketing a partnership plan are given. The steps include: developing your plan, developing marketing materials, executing your marketing plan, nurturing solid partnerships, and communicating your success. (WRM)

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How to Grow Your Tech Ed Program with Win-Win Business Partnerships

Valuable Tips and Strategies to Enlist Community Help in Expanding Your Tech Ed Program

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How to Grow Your Tech Ed Program with Win-Win Business Partnerships

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Introduction

Though widely held by many Americans, the belief that today's students are more poorly educated than past generations is a myth. Today's children, by and large, perform better against traditional educational measures than the students of past generations.

A more genuine—and pressing—concern is whether we're preparing our children to prosper in a constantly changing, complex society in which employers routinely expect employees to understand and use the newest technological tools.

A recent survey of business leaders by the Business Coalition for Education Reform identified the two most important challenges facing education today as: (1) Introducing new approaches that prepare students for a highly technological society, and (2) Overcoming a general fear of change in the educational infrastructure.

One thing is abundantly clear: Education is no longer seen as the sole responsibility of educators and taxpayers. Instead, the development of 21st century teaching innovations depends upon partnership investments in education... partnerships of educators, business people, parents and community leaders working together to provide future generations of students with the skills they'll need to lead happy, productive lives.

As leaders in providing valuable, up-to-date education, teachers and administrators must take the lead in marshaling these powerful community forces...to explain why we need their skills and talents to improve the quality of our children's education... and to show exactly what they can do to help.

The purpose of this booklet is to provide you with valuable tips and insights other educators have implemented to successfully build productive business alliances and help fund the growth of expanding Technology Education programs. So...if you're ready to play a leading role in building a successful business/community coalition for your school or district, read on...

1 Ten Partnership Success Stories

Success Story #1 A Smith Center, Kansas bank was supplying school cheerleaders with promotional footballs (carrying bank advertising) to throw into the stands after every home team touchdown. Noting this, Tech Ed instructor Loren Jacobs saw an opportunity to incorporate a plastics module into his Tech Ed program.

He approached bank officials about the purchase of a rotational molding machine and supplies that would make it possible for Jacobs' students to manufacture the promotional footballs. Bank officials readily agreed to fund the purchase of the molding equipment...plus equipment the students needed to screen print the bank's logo on them.

■

Success Story #2 Smith Center's Jacobs needed a regular supply of aluminum for students to develop projects for a manufacturing module. Students fabricate an aluminum paper punch by casting their own parts...then machining them using CNC controlled lathes and mills.

Jacobs met with his local John Deere dealer, who was happy to supply students with damaged aluminum engine pistons they could melt down and use to make the parts they needed.

■

Success Story #3 Clark County (NV) School District's Jerry Morlan forged partnerships with more than 15 companies and government agencies to fund the initial development of an Introduction to Technology modular program in 40 Clark County middle schools and 10 high schools. Total funding provided by the business and government partners amounted to nearly $250,000.

■

Success Story #4 West Haven (CT) Public School District and The Bayer Corporation, a local research-oriented company, established a partnership which matches Bayer staff with local students to help them learn from professional experts.

Success Story #5 With financial assistance from food giant ConAgra, Jerry Caffey of Valley Public Schools (Valley, NE) established a Tech Ed "Toy Factory," in which his students designed and crafted toys. The students then distributed their creations as Christmas gifts to children of less fortunate families in the Valley area.

■

Success Story #6 The US West Foundation enlisted 271 teachers for programs that involve "using computers and modems to gather information, exchange ideas and otherwise enhance classroom teaching and learning."

Programs funded include that of Kit Carson School (Albuquerque, NM) for a schoolwide network on the Internet...and Williams Middle School for an electronic field trip to build a career exploration curriculum for students in grades 5-8.

■

Success Story #7 Computer chip manufacturer Intel Corporation donated cash, equipment and expertise to the Smart School Project. The goal: To create an information infrastructure to bring school curricula up to date with modern technology.

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Success Story #8 A visionary Tech Ed Instructor at Willis Middle School (Delaware, OH) negotiated a money-saving arrangement with a local foundry pattern business. For the past nine years, the General Castings Corporation has donated raw materials to Ken Stanfill's students for use with a Tech Ed manufacturing module at an annual savings of $2,200.

Success Stories (continued)

Success Story #9 Chuck McClellan, Tech Ed Instructor at Sebastian Middle School (St. Augustine, FL), devised a unique advertising medium to gain business support for his Tech Ed program.

On a portable race track students built for racing their custom-designed, hand-built dragsters, McClellan arranged for the display of 40 high-visibility advertising billboards. His students sold the spaces to community businesses for $100 each. Company contributions paid for production of all billboard displays...with plenty left over to channel into the Sebastian Tech Ed program.

■

Success Story #10 McClellan and his students came up with another innovative approach when they designed and constructed two "Trains for Tomorrow." The trains accommodate more than 60 large advertising display areas promoting local and national firms whose leaders believe in helping students prepare for today's technologically sophisticated workplace.

How Partners Help Your Program

You can usually accomplish more—for a lot less money—when you share your technology education goals with one or more business partners. Here are a few of the key benefits your school or district can enjoy from a well-conceived business partnership:

- ***Financial support*** in purchasing or upgrading Tech Ed modules, expanding laboratory facilities, etc.
- ***Contribution of materials*** for student use in creating Tech Ed products and projects (e.g., metal, plastic, wood, etc.)
- ***Valuable insights*** from your business partners in determining skills students need to succeed in today's job market.
- ***Business skills*** that will help you successfully market and expand your ongoing partnership program.
- ***Ready source*** of professional guest speakers, plant and office tours, field trips and other beneficial class activities.
- ***Potential political influence*** with other business partners, community and government leaders, etc.

As you can see, business partners can contribute a wealth of knowledge and sound ideas to assist in the growth and development of your Tech Ed program...while significantly reducing your funding burden.

2 How Your Partners Benefit

Every productive partnership must create a win-win situation for the participating organizations. And, while you and your school or district derive major benefits from working with local business people, remember to "sell" the important benefits your business partners gain from the relationship:

- ***Strong positive reputation*** with parents and community leaders as an advocate of educational innovation and progress. (It's *your* job to see that word about the good your partners do is spread throughout the community. See Chapter 8.)
- ***Well-trained local workforce*** resulting from students who are technology literate and have explored career opportunities prior to graduation.
- ***New marketing opportunities*** and/or product development ideas that develop from interfacing with students, teachers and administrators.
- ***Increase in business traffic and local quality of life*** through building of long-term economic welfare of the community population.
- ***Reduction of tax burden*** resulting from charitable and educational contributions.

Keep these business benefits in mind and bring them up in your discussions with potential business partners. Don't make the mistake of believing all the business people you talk with are already aware of the benefits their companies can gain from an educational partnership. They aren't.

Developing Your Plan

Form an Action Committee This is an important first step in launching a successful Partnership Program. While every important project needs a "champion" to keep pushing when things get tough, a carefully selected Action Committee brings together people with the diverse talents you'll eventually need to plan and implement your program.

Think of the dedicated, hard-working people you know in every area of your life. Other teachers or administrators. Interested parents. Highly motivated students. Local business people. Chamber of Commerce members. Anyone who has a strong interest in helping your school or district develop a strong Tech Ed program...and is willing to contribute their effort and talent to make it happen.

Identify and Use Committee Member Talents Through discussions with each of your Action Committee members, determine what valuable skills each member can bring to the project. A member with marketing and writing skills, for example, can be assigned to develop the project marketing materials. One with sales experience can be put in charge of making prospect contacts and following up after initial contacts. An articulate business member might be part of the team who meets with prospective business partners. You get the idea.

Develop a Clearly Defined Action Plan Sad to say, you can't just walk into a businessman's office and announce, "We need some money to do some stuff around our Tech Ed lab, and we'd like to use yours. Okay?"

Developing Your Plan (continued)

Instead, you need a solid, attractive plan that:

- Has clear, positive objectives (for your students and business partners).
- Includes active roles for all partner participants.
- Publicly broadcasts the generosity and support of your business partners.
- Is easy to say "Yes" to.

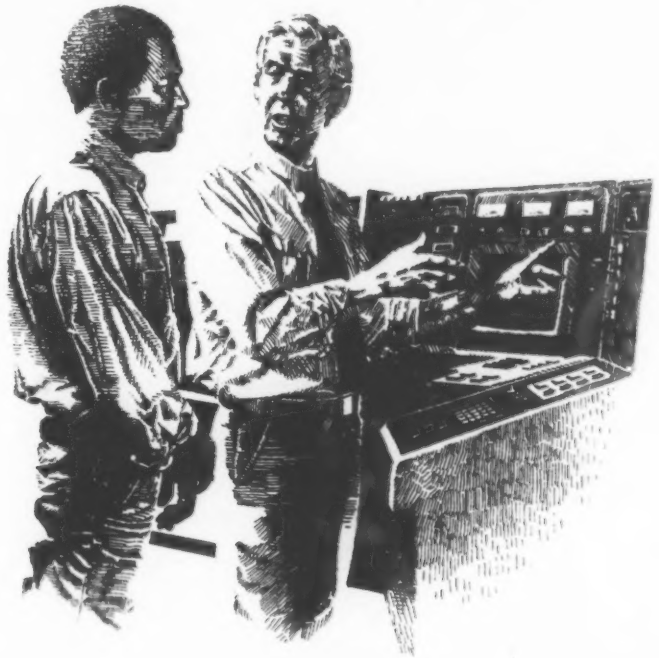
Dawkins Partnership Plan For example, Patrick Gunter, an enterprising Tech Ed instructor at R.P. Dawkins Middle School (Moore, SC), developed a partnership plan that called for "business sponsorship" of 29 new Modular Technology modules. He contacted local businesses by letter and telephone, asking them to consider "sponsoring" (funding) one or more of his new lab modules. He also made a point of fully briefing prospects on the new modules that related most closely to the prospect's particular business.

This innovative Action Plan was successful for a number of reasons. It:

- Allowed companies—even very small ones—to become educational partners for as little as $500 - $2,500, the purchase cost of a single module.
- Invited business partners to participate actively in the development of his new Tech Ed program.
- Recognized company sponsorship by displaying engraved plaques featuring the sponsor's name in the work area of each Tech Ed module.
- Arranged for student teachers at nearby Clemson University to use the laboratory in its undergraduate Tech Ed program, thus increasing exposure of the partners' commitment to educational innovation.
- Made regular reports to his business partners relating the growth and success of the program.

Determine Financial Needs In any module sponsorship program, there are additional costs you need to calculate and provide for. Be sure you've accounted for all expenditures that will be necessary to complete your program objective. If you approach the task creatively, you'll often find ways business sponsors can help you offset direct and indirect costs as well.

Learn from Other Partnership Builders Attend meetings such as the successful School-Business Partnership Conference jointly sponsored by the Delaware (OH) Area Chamber of Commerce, Delaware schools and Ohio Wesleyan University. Gatherings like these are great opportunities to refine your Action Plan, network with other educators in your situation and learn how others have developed effective partner relationships.



Developing Marketing Materials

Once you have a specific, well-conceived Action Plan, you must market it. This is an inescapable aspect of building business partnerships. It's not enough to have hammered out a great, creative Action Plan. You must package it in a clear, attractive way, and present it persuasively to potential business partners throughout your local community...perhaps dozens of them.

The process of marketing is, quite simply, meeting with business people who'll make responsible, responsive partners for you and your school or district...and persuading them to join you in a worthwhile project that produces win-win benefits for both of you.

Here are the two key marketing tools you'll need to accomplish this dual-faceted goal:

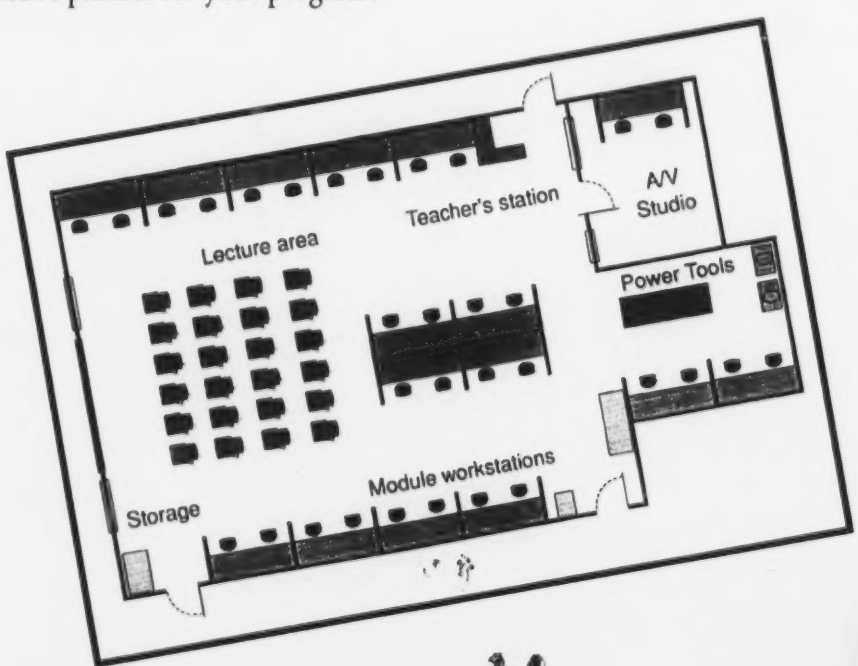
Presentation Binder It takes more than an interest in your particular project to convince prospective partners to invest in your Tech Ed development project. To achieve the comfort level prospects need to commit to you and your project, they must have an overall understanding of your Technology Education Program objectives. This is where your concise, neatly prepared presentation comes in.

Your Presentation Binder must be well-written, to the point and attractive to look at. It should appear to have been created by professional people with a high regard for professionalism and attention to detail. (After all, it's high-caliber people your business prospects want for partners.)

Consider this brief listing of information for inclusion in your presentation booklet:

- Technology Education mission statement
- Number of students, teachers and administrative personnel involved in Tech Ed
- Technology Education Program status and objectives
- Curricula now in place, and curricula you're looking to add
- Tech Ed laboratory floor plan
- Notable student achievements or awards in Tech Ed
- Tech Ed lab photos with students at work
- Highlights of other successful partnership relationships (current or past)
- Letters of Tech Ed support from school or district administrators
- Action Committee member credentials
- Action Plan summary
- Recommended action steps to initiate partnership

Another benefit of developing an effective Presentation Binder: It eliminates the need to cover this important information *personally* every time you meet with a new prospective partner for your program.



Marketing Materials (continued)

Prospect Mailing List To make as many prospect contacts as possible in a short time, use direct mailings of personalized letters. This requires a current database of qualified prospects.

To create your prospect list, first visit your local library. Review the publications that list company names and addresses in your district. Select companies you feel might benefit most from a Tech Ed partnership. Most likely candidates are companies involved in manufacturing, petroleum and gas, industrial equipment, computers, pharmaceuticals and transportation. Company size isn't critical; both large companies and small are interested in technology education partnerships.

Also, check with your local Chamber of Commerce for directories of prospect companies. Record the company name and address, and the name and title of the President or Chief Executive Officer. These are the executives who make decisions about company donations and business partnerships. Dealing with lower ranking managers who need to pass your request up to the decision-maker works occasionally...but not often. You'll have more success, faster, if you talk directly to the top executive, the one who can give you a "yes" or "no" answer.

Save hours of sorting and mailing effort by inputting your database information onto a computer equipped with mail merge software. Mail merge makes it fast and easy to create personalized letters and envelopes that look individually prepared.

Referrals are also an excellent source of new partners. In your discussions with partnership prospects, ask if they know of other firms that would be interested in participating in your program. You'll be surprised how often these suggestions can lead you to successful new partnerships.

Executing Your Marketing Plan

Introductory Letter Assign the best letter-writer on your Action Committee to write a one-page (or two, at most) letter explaining your interest in talking with the executive *personally* about your Partnership Plan. Keep the letter's focus on the business benefits of your Partnership Plan.

Use a computer mail merge program and a laser printer to produce your letters and envelopes. Personalize them with the top executive's name and title (spelled correctly, of course). While this is basically a form letter, if you handle it correctly, it looks like a *personal* letter.

Do *not* send "Dear Sir" form letters or use mailing labels to address your envelopes. This immediately identifies your effort as a mass marketing campaign, and diminishes prospect interest. (A potential business partner wants to believe you've singled him out from all the other companies in town because he, and his company, are special to you in some way.)

Mail your introductory letters at a rate of 10-15 per week to allow you adequate time to follow-up with your telephone calls.

Telephone Follow-up Three to five days after mailing your letter, phone your prospect and ask for a half-hour of his time to sit down in his office and discuss the benefits of your Partnership Plan.

While you may be tempted to skip this follow-up step, *don't.* Meeting your prospects on the phone (first) and (then) in person is the only way you'll ever get them to hear your persuasive story about why they should support your program. Remember, the objective of your telephone call *is not to sell your program.* Its sole purpose is to arrange a face-to-face meeting with the prospect so he or she can hear your well-conceived plan and be persuaded by your spirit and enthusiasm.

Marketing Plan (continued)

Interview Objectives Assign your two most enthusiastic, sales-savvy committee members to meet with prospects who agree to initial meetings. Present your story (using your Presentation Binder as a guide) and invite questions from your prospect.

Arrive for your meeting 10-15 minutes early. This allows you to relax and mentally run through your presentation one more time.

Try to limit your presentation to about 30 minutes. Your prospects likely have a full agenda of pressing business issues, and you don't want to risk overstaying your welcome. Just be sure to end your presentation *before* the prospect begins drumming her fingers on the desk, or sneaking glances at his watch. These are signs the prospect's mind has moved to other issues and is no longer really listening.

As your interview progresses, listen for clues as to what your prospect finds most interesting about a potential educational partnership, and direct the discussion in that direction. Be sure to mention the benefits he can expect *for his company* by participating in your program.

Final Details When you complete your presentation, ask prospects if they have any questions or comments on your plan...and listen carefully to what they say. (They may have a great idea or two you'll want to build into your overall plan when you get back to your office!)

After your first meeting, send a thank you letter to each prospect within 24 hours. This is common courtesy and expected...even if the result of your meeting wasn't necessarily positive. And, naturally, you'll want to schedule follow-up phone calls and meetings with prospects who ask for more information or need more time to consider your proposal.

7 Nurturing Solid Partnerships

Over the past 10 years, administrators at Clark County School District of Las Vegas (NV) have mastered the skills required to build lasting partnerships with local business and community groups. They currently manage more than 700 active partnerships involving literally hundreds of companies that have an intense interest in the success of the district and its students.

For example, with financial and manpower support of Nevada Power Company (NPC), district students converted a new Chevrolet pickup truck (provided by NPC), from gasoline to electrical power. Since its completion, the electrified vehicle has been put into daily service in NPC's service fleet.

Jerry Morlan, Administrative Specialist at Clark County, provides these tips on how to nurture productive, long-lasting business partnerships:

- Don't enter into a partnership with the attitude that the only thing you want from business people is their money.
- Make your partners an important part of your curriculum development. Listen to what they have to say. Follow their advice.
- Work as hard to see that your business partners achieve what they want from the partnership as you do to ensure your school or district gets the results it's looking for.
- Manage partnerships so that your business partners develop a feeling of shared "ownership" of the program and its results. If you do this, and they feel you truly need and appreciate their help, *your business partners will not allow your program to fail.*

Partnerships (continued)

Other valuable tips for nurturing successful business partnerships include:

- Never apologize for asking for a company's support. Avoid any suggestion that you desperately need a contribution. It's never necessary—or appropriate—to appear to be begging.
- Provide regular feedback to partners about program progress.
- Give business partners public recognition for their supporting role when your program is featured in newspaper and magazine articles, TV coverage, etc.
- Include student names and photos in publicity materials submitted to local news media to heighten parental interest and sense of program "ownership."
- Invite members of the partner's staff to speak at school or community events.
- Arrange student field trips to your partner's place of business when appropriate.

Communicate Your Success

When you succeed in launching one or more partnerships, it's critical to keep them highly visible in your community. Why? Because the more positive publicity you create for your program, the more public relations value your partners derive from the relationship. And, the more value your partners derive, the more eager they'll be to expand their contributions as your program grows.

Here's just a sampling of some of the effective techniques you can use to help gain publicity and broadened community support for your program and its partners:

- Work with industry and business groups to sponsor Tech Ed awards presented to outstanding students at school assemblies, civic, government and fraternal organization meetings, etc.
- Encourage your Action Committee members and students to get involved in volunteer organizations.
- Establish close rapport with the community section editors of your local newspapers. Invite them to assign reporters and photographers to your award ceremonies and other events.
- Use school audio-video equipment and student talent to videotape special events and make these tapes available to local cable TV stations.
- Plan and hold a Tech Ed Fair, displaying the best of student work in the technology laboratory area.
- Host an open house in your Tech Ed lab. Invite parents, potential business partners, community leaders and neighboring school officials to tour your facilities and talk with some of your students and teachers.
- Attend Tech Ed Workshops and Seminars to keep abreast of the new ideas that are constantly being introduced, and gather valuable new ideas from the other teachers in attendance.

A Sincere Invitation

Thank you for taking the time to review this brief collection of pointers on how you can establish productive partnerships with companies, community groups, parents and fellow educators in your area. We hope these ideas, and the success stories of other Tech Ed educators like you, will encourage you to pursue the worthwhile goal of creating a thriving partnership program in your school or district. As an early innovator of quality Tech Ed modules, Hearlihy & Company stands ready to help you.

We've prepared a packet of sample letters, press releases, scripts and checklists you'll find useful in planning your partnership campaign. To receive your Partner-ship Sample Pack — *without cost or obligation* — please call us Toll-Free at 1-800-622-1000, or drop a note to "Free Partnership Sample Pack" at the address on the back cover of this booklet.

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